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ABSTRACT

STUDENT-FACULTY PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC DECISION MAKING SHOULD EXCLUDE THOSE WHO SEE THIS PROCESS IN TERMS OF A POWER STRUGGLE. THOUGH STUDENTS HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVELY AND PRODUCTIVELY INVOLVED IN DECISION MAKING FOR GENERATIONS, THE CURRENT DEMAND FOR MULTI-LEVEL INVOLVEMENT DIFFERS BECAUSE IT REPRESENTS A GRASP FOR STUDENT POWER. IF DECISION MAKING INCLUDES THE COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION OF FACTS, STUDENTS AND FACULTY ARE EQUALLY QUALIFIED TO DO THE FIRST, BUT FACULTY BY VIRTUE OF EXPERIENCE MAY BE MORE QUALIFIED TO DO THE LATTER. HOWEVER, STUDENTS AND FACULTY CAN WORK TOGETHER TO DEVELOP SOUND SOLUTIONS TO UNIVERSITY PROBLEMS. AS KINGMAN BREWSTER HAS STATED: THE GREAT MAJORITY OF STUDENTS DO NOT WANT TO SPEND MUCH OF THEIR TIME AND ENERGY IN THE GUIDANCE OF GOVERNANCE OF THEIR UNIVERSITY. IN ADDITION, IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT A STUDENT GENERATION LASTS FOR ONLY FOUR YEARS AND STUDENTS ARE THEREFORE NOT ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE POLICIES THEY HELP DEVISE. WHILE STUDENTS SHOULD SERVE ALONG WITH FACULTY ON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES, THEIR ROLE IN DECISION MAKING SHOULD BE LIMITED TO POLICIES THAT WILL HAVE SHORT-RANGE EFFECTS. (AF)

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THE COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES

Ninth Annual Meeting

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THE RELATIVE ROLES OF FACULTY AND STUDENTS IN ACADEMIC DECISION-MAKING

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The title of our program, in all probability and particularly in the current atmosphere, semantically implies different things to different persons.

1. It may suggest that there exists a harmonious interplay between faculty and students toward the establishment of academic goals and procedures, or
2. That some type of struggle for power is developing with the students vs. the faculty.
3. Or it may suggest that the students' role in academic decision-making is relatively negligible or the other way around.
4. That the students' interest in determining academic policy is something just recently emerging, a new era of student involvement.

In order to initiate an exchange of ideas on the relative roles of faculty and students in academic decision-making, I will proceed by raising the following questions:

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1. What has been our past experience relative to students and faculty involvement in academic decision-making--is this something new, or is it just a change in style; a different way of demanding the right of student participation in making policy decisions?
2. Is President Kingman Brewster's assumption correct that most students would rather have the policies of the university directed by the faculty and administration than by their classmates?
3. On the assumption that student-faculty groups are appropriate for academic decision-making, are they appropriate for engagement with any and all academic matters?
4. What specific insights are provided by students which are lacking among faculty in deliberations on decision-making?
5. And finally, should not both parties, students and faculty, be held accountable for the decisions they make?

Before we examine these questions, I wish to state my position with regard to the credentials of individuals in either category, students or faculty, when they desire participation in the process of academic decision-making. It is not too much to expect that individuals in either category should have established a record of successful performance as either a student or a faculty member. This statement should not be misconstrued as suggesting that only

"conformists" or "establishment" people would be eligible. To the contrary, sincerely motivated persons with innovative, imaginative suggestions would be most welcome, and we need their ideas. However, individuals seeking this association to gain "power," or individuals presenting non-negotiable demands, or individuals with a passion for disruption and denigration of existing programs without attention to constructive modifications--these individuals are inappropriate for participation in student-faculty decision-making processes. What I am saying is that my idea of student-faculty participation in decision-making excludes those whose concept of such communication is in terms of a power struggle. Although it may sound somewhat trite and naive, particularly in these times of intermittent bold and gutter-type pronouncements, I subscribe to the kind of dialogue conducive to a rational and logical weighing of facts as well as to carefully thought out opinions. Indeed, I would expect an educated assessment of all relevant data which hopefully leads to the evolvement of the most "correct" decision. Less than an atmosphere of mutual respect is not likely to produce this result.

Past Experience of Student Involvement

We all realize that the current attempts by some students to gain more control over university policies are not new. We are familar with events in the 13th and 14th centuries when such moves were at their zenith. However, by the 16th century, a pattern of student life which fostered a high degree of

administrative control had evolved. To bring us closer to the present, some describe the period prior to World War II as one of total non-involvement by students on the university campuses. This was followed by a period of nominal involvement in the mid 50's--the students were often described as apathetic--with the presence of a few students on a few committees.

However, during the 60's, the students raised their voices. They became active in response to special situations, e.g., poor instruction or changes in requirements, which they saw as needing change--and presented an organized response to this.

Currently there is an attitude for general involvement; student participation at all levels of university affairs, equal student voice and vote in all matters ranging from budget to housing to curricula to grading to appointments and promotions and more--a grasp for student power.

I would like to take exception to the generally held opinion that student involvement is something discovered by the current generation or something that only existed in the middle ages--we have known effective, productive involvement in other generations.

Let me recall from personal experience that back in the 30's various student clubs and departmental organizations provided for very effective communication between the faculty and students. There was an atmosphere of mutual respect; the noise level was low--the academic objectives were high. These student clubs, as you will recall, had active interested faculty

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advisors. During the course of the year most of the faculty met with the student groups--socially and professionally. The times were slower; the campuses smaller but there existed an excellent opportunity for student input to faculty on all university matters. I simply want to establish the point that the opportunity for student input into academic matters was, in fact, readily available and very directly possible in years past.

To a degree the difference now is a function of size--size of the student body, size of the faculty, and size of the campus. Bigness does introduce complications, but we cannot escape from some degree of increase in size. There are simply more people inhabiting the same space, and we might as well adjust to this fact. It reminds me of the person who complained about being old, but he was quick to ad lib that the alternative was not very attractive.

There is also the matter of affluence. The current generation of students has the time to reflect upon national and global predicaments. They discern the gap between the ideals and realities in a democracy.

Qualifications and Justifications for the Student Role

What are the distinctive and special contributions that may be provided by the student in academic decision-making? Some students express the opinion that the university would be a better place if more students participated in decision-making. What is the basis for this assumption? Some feel that the student is capable of providing more creative and/or imaginative

thought on matters being decided. Students are less attached to preconceived values and hence can be more flexible in their judgments. Students also seek a status of "partnership" or an association with faculty as members of a community of scholars. Finally, there exists an inherent attitude that they (the students) have a right to be involved with the decisions which will directly affect them. Without this opportunity for participation, an apprehensive, disgruntled attitude may prevail. William Paley, the chairman of CBS and a trustee of Columbia University commented on this feeling after student disorders on the campus, saying: ".....The university may seem (to students) like just one more example of the establishment's trying to run their lives without consulting them..... It is essential that we make it possible for students to work for the correction of such conditions legitimately and effectively rather than compulsively and violently....."

The process of decision-making involves, among other considerations, the collection of all the facts which are pertinent to the subject under consideration. The more complete the factual documentation the better the prospects for a "correct" decision. Students as well as faculty are capable of collecting the necessary facts; depending upon the issue at hand, one group might be more aware of sources than the other, but with appropriate effort and resources either group could produce the facts.

Opinions, experiences, and advice also need to be sought. Again either faculty or students are capable of gathering this information. However, the

question may be raised as to whether faculty, by virtue of experience, might not provide a more sound assessment or interpretation of varied opinions, advice and experiences. Admittedly, there are likely to be instances where the gifted amateur might be equal to the seasoned professional. However, I do not think it likely that one could depend on consistent, eminently sound advice by the lesser experienced individual. Nevertheless, students and faculty working together could arrive at conclusions, representing a synthesis of viewpoints as well as providing more assurance of a thoroughly thought-out solution.

On Students' Interest in Decision-making Processes--University Governance

The President of Yale University, Mr. Kingman Brewster, is quoted as follows: "I do not think that the great majority of students want to spend very much of their time or energy in the guidance and governance of their university." I would agree with this statement. And at the graduate student level, particularly the doctorate, the student must be willing to dedicate himself fully to the pursuit of and the mastery of knowledge in his chosen field. He must have a strong commitment to his studies and research, especially research. I am sure that many of us would be inclined to question whether a successful graduate student has much additional time for these extracurricular activities.

However, this rationale is neither sufficient nor appropriate to exclude the student from some manner of participation in the deliberations which

affect his educational opportunity. Participation in selected areas of the students' special interest could be of mutual benefit--both an educational experience for the student as well as a contribution toward the evolution of the institution. However, I must reiterate my contention, that to be eligible for such participation the student must have demonstrated that he is indeed establishing a satisfactory record for himself as a student and that both the quality and the progress of his studies establish that he keeps his sights on the prime target, namely, his academic program.

Decision-making and Accountability

C. Peter Magrath, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, University of Nebraska, has written: "Students are birds of passage who usually lack the expertise and sophistication to function effectively on complex university affairs until their junior and senior years. Within a year or two they graduate, but the administration and faculty are left with the policies they helped devise. A student generation lasts for four years; colleges and universities are more permanent."

President Kingman Brewster, speaking to student members of the Yale Political Union, said the same thing in a different way, stating: "I am convinced that representation is not the clue to university improvement; indeed, that if carried too far, it could lead to disaster. I am, rather, now convinced that accountability is what we should be striving for." I share this opinion,

and I think that this point is central to the issue of relative roles of faculty and students in decision-making. In the broad sense the students are transient, the faculty is permanent; this is a short term, long term relationship. The degree of correctness of decisions can only be ascertained by testing their effects. This introduces the concept of time. In a simplistic fashion, this might suggest that any significant role of students in decision-making be limited to such matters that will have short range effects.

They, like the faculty, should be held accountable for the consequences of their decisions. Without some adherence to the principle of accountability, I am afraid that we will only encourage irresponsibility and court disaster as suggested by President Brewster.

As I have already suggested, there is undoubtedly much merit in seeking the ideas and suggestions put forth by our students. In many areas, their enthusiasms and keen vision can be of great value to all of us. In those areas of graduate student life which are most removed from us, they can serve as additional "ears" to aid all of us in helping to remain attuned to the general picture of student welfare. In most instances, participation on university committees is valuable preparation for the same sort of contribution which we will ask them to make as faculty members. They have the opportunity to learn first-hand that de[illegible]on or policy-making is an anguished intellectual activity. For these reasons I strongly support student participation along with faculty on university working committees. When it comes to actual

decision-making, then it is relevant to raise the question of accountability. This, in turn, would determine the relative roles of students and faculty.

At the University of Maryland we have moved toward student representation on the University Senate as well as student representation on all of the standing committees of the Graduate Council in addition to other specially established committees.

The standing committees of the Graduate Council are ten in number; collectively, they give attention to the complete spectrum of Graduate School affairs. It is in these working Graduate Council committees that recommendations for procedural and policy changes are initiated. Students participate along with faculty in voice as well as in vote. This kind of representation by graduate students together with a tie to an effective Graduate Student Organization may provide a means to develop a cohesive unity to pursue a common objective.